



Technology Improves Rural Health Care

Over the past 10 years, TOP has awarded 115 grants to projects focused on rural health. These investments include projects that use digital technologies to train health care professionals, link remote health care providers, provide telemedicine and telehealth consultations using videoconferencing, serve people with disabilities, and provide direct patient care for thousands of rural residents.

Minot State University (Minot, North Dakota) is providing telehealth services to people with developmental and other disabilities using Internet2 technology. The network will deliver psychiatric, neurological, orthopedic, and nursing services to people who most need these services but are a great distance from large health facilities.

University of Utah Health Science Center (Salt Lake City, Utah) is pioneering the use of telemedicine for the immediate evaluation and treatment of severe burns in the mountainous west. The project is designed to improve survival rates, reduce costs, and enhance outcomes by providing electronic access to the only Burn Center in a five state region.

West Virginia Primary Care Network (Huntington, West Virginia) enables rural health care workers to help patients more effectively manage chronic conditions with new videoconferencing options for training and interaction with patients. The system will provide specialized chronic health care to patients with diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, and asthma.

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (South Dakota) is using distance education to train the unemployed for entry-level health care positions open at a new senior-assisted living facility located on the reservation. The training project is delivered over wireless broadband to community technology centers, making it possible to complete the training by overcoming the barriers of distance.

Hawaii Area Health Education Center (Honolulu, Hawaii) is expanding the State's digital network connections to 25 rural learning centers in Hawaii's most remote areas. The centers include videoconferencing capacity that allows nurses to carry out telehealth home consultations in order to care for people with diabetes and other chronic conditions.

Hays Medical Center (Hays, Kansas) is collaborating with local specialists and primary care physicians in 18 rural counties to use telemedicine to monitor newly discharged hospital patients. Computer-based interactive video will be used on a daily basis to provide in-home monitoring of selected vital statistics of medically fragile patients.

University of Vermont and State Agricultural College (Burlington, Vermont) targets the need for improvement in the treatment of trauma cases, focusing on the pre-hospital phase of trauma care for predominately rural residents. The project uses a personal computer-based, two way interactive video system to provide 24-hour access to trauma center specialty surgeons at work and at home.